

We claim:

1. An absorbent article having a longitudinal direction, a transverse direction, a vertical direction substantially normal to both the longitudinal and transverse directions, and a body side, the absorbent article comprising:
  - a) an absorbent core having a body side surface, the absorbent core comprising an outer absorbent member having a central void open toward the body side of the absorbent article, and a central absorbent member disposed over the central void of the outer absorbent member and extending into the void; and
  - b) a wicking barrier disposed between the outer absorbent member and the central absorbent member, the wicking barrier comprising a vertical component and a horizontal component, the vertical component spanning a vertical distance between the outer absorbent member and the central absorbent member, and the horizontal component spanning a horizontal distance on the body side surface of the absorbent core.
2. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the wicking barrier is liquid pervious.
3. The absorbent article of Claim 2, wherein the wicking barrier comprises an apertured polymeric film
4. The absorbent article of Claim 2, wherein the wicking barrier comprises a spunbond web.

5. The absorbent article of Claim 2, wherein the wicking barrier has a liquid permeability gradient such that the wicking barrier is more liquid permeable away from the body side of the article.

6. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the wicking barrier is a fluid impervious film provided with fluid pervious pores remote from the body side surface of the absorbent core.

7. The absorbent article of Claim 6, wherein the pores in the wicking barrier are about 1 mm or greater below the surface of the outer absorbent member.

8. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the central absorbent member further comprises an outer perimeter and a center, and the wicking barrier is adapted to establish a pathway for fluid flow from the center of the central absorbent member to the outer perimeter of the central absorbent member.

9. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the wicking barrier comprises multiple vertical layers of barrier material.

10. The absorbent article of Claim 1, further comprising a topsheet, wherein the topsheet is provided with at least one fold to form an elevated runoff barrier.

11. The absorbent article of Claim 1, wherein the central absorbent member comprises a plurality of vertically oriented layers of nonabsorbent material.

12. The absorbent article of Claim 11, wherein the central absorbent member further comprises an outer edge and a centermost region, and wherein lateral wicking flow from the centermost region of the central absorbent member to the outer edge of the central absorbent member is possible via a path between the plurality of vertically oriented layers of nonabsorbent material.

13. The absorbent article of Claim 1 wherein the central absorbent member comprises a spiral wound composite having at least one layer of absorbent material and at least one layer of barrier material wound together in a spiral form.

14. The absorbent article of Claim 1 wherein the central absorbent member comprises a composite having multiple vertical layers of barrier material alternating with layers of absorbent material.

15. An absorbent article with a crotch region, a longitudinal direction, a transverse direction, and a vertical direction substantially normal to both the longitudinal and transverse directions, the absorbent article comprising:

- a) an absorbent core having a body side surface, the absorbent core comprising a central absorbent member and an outer shaping member, the outer shaping member having a central void defined therein for receiving at least a portion of the central absorbent member, whereby an interface is defined between the central absorbent member and the outer shaping member, the interface spanning a vertical distance; and

b) a wicking barrier disposed along a vertical distance of the interface between the central absorbent member and the outer absorbent member, wherein the wicking barrier comprises a horizontal component spanning a horizontal distance on the body side surface of the absorbent core.

16. The absorbent article of Claim 15, wherein the outer shaping member comprises a thickness, an edge width, and a basis weight, and the outer shaping member has a thickness of at least about 1 millimeter, an edge width of at least about 2 millimeters, and a basis weight of at least about 100 grams per square meter.

17. The absorbent article of Claim 15, wherein the wicking barrier further comprises a horizontal component spanning a distance of at least about 1 millimeter on the surface of the absorbent core.

18. An absorbent article comprising a composite absorbent core having a center, the absorbent core having a body side surface and comprising a central absorbent member and a surrounding outer absorbent member, wherein a plurality of vertically oriented segments of hydrophobic material in the central absorbent member define liquid wicking pathways from the center of the central absorbent member to the outer absorbent member.

19. The absorbent article of Claim 18, wherein the central absorbent member comprises a spiral wound composite having at least one layer of absorbent material and at least one layer of barrier material wound together in a spiral form.

20. An absorbent article comprising a backsheet and a concentric absorbent structure attached to the backsheet, the concentric absorbent structure having a thickness and comprising multiple alternating concentric layers of barrier material and absorbent material, wherein the barrier material substantially spans the thickness of the concentric absorbent structure.

21. The absorbent article of Claim 20, wherein the absorbent article further comprises a liquid pervious topsheet attached to the backsheet.

22. The absorbent article of Claim 20, wherein the absorbent material comprises cellulosic fibers.

23. The absorbent article of Claim 20, wherein the concentric absorbent structure comprises a spiral wound composite formed by cutting a slice from a spiral wound roll formed from an absorbent web and a barrier layer wound together.

24. The absorbent article of Claim 20, wherein the concentric absorbent structure comprises two or more adjacent layers of barrier material adapted to slide relative to each other under shearing stress or lateral compression such that the concentric absorbent structure can deform in the thickness direction by sliding action of one layer relative to the other.

25. The absorbent article of Claim 20, wherein the concentric absorbent structure comprises a continuous strip of barrier material spirally wound about a layer of an absorbent cellulosic web.

26. The absorbent article of Claim 20, wherein the barrier material comprises a strip selected from the group consisting of a polymeric film, an apertured film, and a nonwoven web.

27. The absorbent article of Claim 20, wherein the barrier material comprises a thermoplastic hydrophobic material deposited on the absorbent material to provide a wicking barrier between successive layers of the absorbent material.

28. The absorbent article of Claim 20, wherein the absorbent material of the concentric absorbent structure comprises at least one of a layer of airlaid comminuted cellulosic fibers, a wet laid tissue, a dry laid tissue, and a cotton web.